

Appendix: F – Mutual Aid and Automatic Aid Systems

State laws usually provide for mutual aid and mutual assistance between emergency providers — California is no exception. The proposed Fontana Fire Protection District would plan to participate in the State of California Master Mutual Aid Agreement. Under this type of agreement, the proposed District could request fire resources to aid in large fires or other disasters from municipalities or other agencies throughout the State, and likewise would respond to calls for service outside the district's boundaries, generally in surrounding Southern California counties.

The proposed Fontana Fire Protection District should also anticipate being a participant in local mutual aid agreements. In some cases, the proposed Fontana Fire Protection District should plan to execute such with bordering fire jurisdictions to provide reciprocal automatic aid. Although automatic aid is not currently as widely instituted in San Bernardino County as has been experienced in other areas, expanding the practice is a good first step to provide citizens with the closest available assistance, regardless of jurisdictional boundary limits.³⁶

The proposed Fontana Fire Protection District, as outlined in the Service Level Criteria (Appendix: L – Draft JPA Contract for Services), should establish four, six, and eight-minute response capabilities of mutual aid fire stations surrounding the District. This should be prepared to measure and predict resource capabilities.

Central Valley Fire and other area emergency service providers currently do very little cross training even though they are neighbors and depend on each other for emergency assistance from time to time. The lack of regional joint training can cause a lack of familiarity and interaction between the jurisdictions. For a more effective mutual and automatic aid program, as well as maximum credit in the ISO fire rating system, the proposed District should anticipate increased scheduling for multi-agency drills.³⁷ Ideally, such drills should occur at least once each quarter and be recorded as multi-agency training in all participating agency records.

³⁶ For example, fire agencies in northern San Diego County (commonly referred to as North Zone) have developed an automatic aid agreement that includes a provision for “dropped borders.” The nearest resource responds without regard for jurisdictional boundaries.

³⁷ ISO is an independent organization that serves insurance companies, fire departments, insurance regulators, and others by providing information about risk. ISO uses the Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS) to review the fire-fighting capabilities of individual communities.

Beyond ISO credit, these training opportunities would naturally tend to lead toward enhanced working relationships between the agencies involved. As a result, more regional thinking begins to occur; and departments then gravitate toward cooperating more closely in planning, policy, and procedural development.